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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Twenty-sixth session of the Commission/ seventeenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
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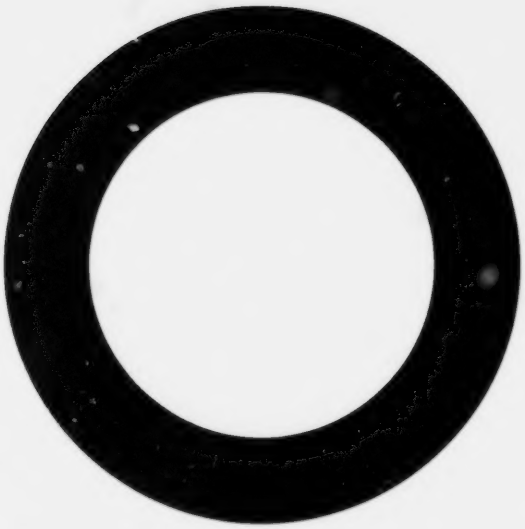
A REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE PLACEMENT OF AFRICAN EXPERTS

A PROPOSAL

X91-570



1. The purpose of this proposal is to secure a mandate from the Conference in order to develop a project for funding under the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development (UNTFAD). The project's objective is to pre-empt the out-migration of skilled manpower from the region by presenting opportunities to those who would otherwise migrate to exercise their professions within the continent. This would reduce the brain-drain while also helping African countries mitigate their skill shortages.

2. The proposal is based on the assumption - largely supported by studies on the brain-drain - that most victims of the brain drain would rather remain in another country within the continent than migrate to countries of the North. Therefore, creating opportunities for them to stay would amount to preserving Another merit of the proposal is that it encourages the sharing of expertise among African countries, in the process obviating the need for recourse to be made to the recruitment of out-of-region experts.

3. It should be recalled that as far back as 1973, the summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the African Declaration on Cooperation, Development and Economic Independence which, with regard to cooperation in the utilization of human resources, undertook to:

(a) "Facilitate the free movement of persons essential for the exchange of ideas and economic integration and give priority to cooperation in the exchange of professional manpower...";

(b) "Take appropriate measures to put an end to the brain-drain in Africa and to prompt qualified Africans living abroad to return, with a view to the rapid phasing out of technical assistance from outside Africa."

4. To this end, the Heads of State and Government called for the establishment of an Intra-African Technical Cooperation Bureau whose functions should include:

(a) "Enabling African countries with a sufficiency of skilled personnel to make this available to other African countries needing the services of such personnel;

(b) "Giving Africans the possibility of further developing their expertise by tackling problems in other African host countries; and

(c) "Fostering the spirit of cooperation and solidarity among African countries."

5. The present proposal thus finds its justification in the above-mentioned Declaration of the OAU Heads of State and Government. ECA has, since 1985, responded to the call to put in place measures for reversing the brain-drain by implementing the Return of Skills Programme for Africa which identifies skilled Africans in the countries of the North and returns them into jobs in African countries. This proposed programme seeks to implement that part of the Declaration that calls for the regional exchange of experts.

ACTION REQUIRED

6. The Conference of Ministers is being requested to endorse this proposal and to give its approval for ECA to proceed with the development and implementation of Regional Programme for the Placement of African Experts (REPPAE).

A. Background and justification

7. One major development problem in Africa is the shortage of qualified middle- and high-level personnel in scientific, technical and managerial categories. A great number of African countries are affected by the outflow of their skilled human resources to industrialized countries particularly in Europe and North America. The number of qualified African nationals residing and working in Western countries

is considerable. Between 1960 and 1975, it is estimated that some "27,000 high-level Africans left the continent for the West. Between 1975 and 1984, this number increased to about 40,000 and then almost doubled to approximately 70,000 Africans by 1987. This represents almost 30 per cent of the high level manpower stock available within the continent today". 1/

8. Unfortunately, this trend is expected to increase in the 1990s. As a result, African countries will be deprived of the contribution that their qualified nationals could make in the implementation of national, regional or interregional development plans and the attainment of development objectives. They will also be deprived of the returns on the substantial investments they made on their nationals through education, training and the general provision of social services.

9. The seriousness of the brain-drain and its effects have been recognized at national and international levels and various measures have been advocated to reduce it somewhat. The joint ECA/IOM Return of Skills Programme for Africa (RESPA) designed by the Geneva-based International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is one of the assistance measures developed to help solve the problems of the brain-drain.

10. RESPA aims at reversing the brain-drain through a selective return of skilled African nationals living and working in developed countries. Since it became operational in 1985, it has proved that it has great potentials to contributing to the alleviation of the problems of the brain-drain in Africa. It has managed to return from developed countries to Africa, many hundreds of African nationals with various skills and qualifications such as engineers, doctors, agronomists, teachers and other specialists.

11. But given the magnitude and the increasing trend of the brain-drain in Africa, other measures should be developed along with RESPA.

12. An important area which needs to be explored is how to retain within the continent a greater number of qualified Africans who, because of lack of job opportunities in the continent, would emigrate to developed countries.

13. In this regard, a programme should be developed to look into the uneven distribution of skilled manpower among African countries and to redirect skills from one African country to another in order to provide jobs within Africa to skilled Africans who otherwise would emigrate.

14. The pattern of skill shortages is not the same in all countries of the region. Some countries are better endowed in one or more skill areas while others may be experiencing acute shortages of manpower in the same areas. For a better distribution of skills available for development within the region, a programme should be developed which would identify surpluses and shortages of middle- and high-level manpower in African countries with a view to searching for suitable vacancies which would be filled by any skilled African in any African country.

15. One obvious advantage of such programme is that it would go a long way towards retaining within Africa a good number of qualified Africans who because of lack of information on job opportunities in the continent would emigrate to other regions of the world. Most of the 70,000 qualified Africans known to be living and working in developed countries would prefer to work in African countries if appropriate employment opportunities were offered to them. Also some of those who seek employment opportunities in other regions do so as a last resort, either because their search for employment within the continent has failed or because of uncertainties about their chances in other employment markets within the region.

1/ ECA, "An enabling environment to retain Africa's high-level manpower", document ECA/ICHD/88/33, March 1988, p.1.

16. In addition to depriving African countries of their skilled human resources, the heavy outflow of scientific, technical and managerial manpower from Africa has helped to reinforce the dependency of African countries on very expensive foreign expertise. Tens of thousands of these out-of-region experts are today engaged in development projects in all sectors of the African economies - government, the state-owned enterprises, the private sector, etc. This situation, combined with the increasing trend in the out-migration of Africa's skilled manpower will deprive Africa of its vital development resources and make it more heavily dependant on foreign expertise. As a result, further strains will be placed on the region's prospects for achieving socio-economic recovery and accelerated development.

17. To forestall such an eventuality, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity agreed that measures to arrest the brain-drain should be one of the areas of priority action when they adopted Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, 1986-1990 (APPER). This was supported by the international community in the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990 (UN-PAAERD). Also the need to arrest the brain-drain was stressed by the International Conference on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development and at the third meeting of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization, both held in Khartoum, the Sudan in March 1988.

14. This proposed programme is, therefore, in support of efforts to arrest the brain-drain. It complements the earlier-mentioned programme, RESPA, which receives substantial financial support from the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Government of the United States of America and whose aim is a selective return of qualified Africans from developed countries to African countries. This proposed project seeks to minimize the chances of an increased outmigration of qualified African nationals. It will:

(a) Retain these resources within the continent to play their part in the development process;

(b) Ensure that greater returns are realized on the significant investments made on them over the years by African Governments; and

(c) Promote the use of middle- and high-level manpower on a TCDC basis.

B. Objectives

19. The overall objective of this programme is to assist African countries to mitigate the skill shortages that constrain their development, to ease the burden of having to contend with high and growing numbers of educated unemployed and underemployed within their economies and to develop a regional framework to tackle the outflow of skilled manpower and to, thus, tackle the brain-drain. More immediately, the programme's objectives are to:

(a) Promote a greater utilization of available African expertise to fill key vacancies anywhere within the continent;

(b) Develop the spirit of cooperation among African countries in the utilization of the region's middle- and high-level qualified nationals;

(c) Stem the tide of the brain-drain and increase the contributions of Africa's pool of skilled manpower to the development of the region;

(d) Reduce Africa's excessive dependence on foreign expertise;

(e) Reduce the levels of educated unemployment and underemployment in the African economies;

(f) Increase the returns on the region's investments in the development of high- and middle-level manpower.

C. Outputs

20. The programme will evolve a mechanism for identifying vacancies in African countries and will give wide publicity within Africa to the opportunities for employment thus offered under the programme. The vacancy list will be updated through additions and deletions once every two months. Candidates available for recruitment under the programme will also be identified. A summary of their curriculum vitae will be given wide circulation to prospective employers in African countries for consideration. The list of candidates will be updated on a quarterly basis.

21. It is expected that at least 50 placements will be made in the very first year of operation of the programme, and that this number should rise to at least 100 in the second year.

D. Modalities of operation

(a) African Governments will be invited to participate in the programme. A letter from a government authority will be enough to make that government's participation official. Each participating government will then designate a senior official to serve as liaison between the programme and his government. He will be responsible for:

(i) identifying national candidates and transmitting to ECA relevant biographical data on them;

(ii) identifying vacancies put up for recruitment under the programme and transmit information on these vacancies to ECA;

(iii) processing the application of candidates for local vacancies and overseeing the recruitment process at the national level;

(iv) ensuring that conditions of employment under the terms of the programme are fully met at the national level;

(v) reception of incoming recruits, monitoring their settling in and ensuring that their welfare problems are solved;

(vi) preparing an annual evaluation report on each recruit serving under the programme;

(b) Employers will be expected to pay the full salaries, allowances and benefits of those they employ through the programme at the going local rate. In addition, they will provide housing or a housing allowance in lieu at an acceptable rate to each employee. Initial employment should be for a period of not less than twelve months. A three-month notice will be given before separation of any recruit is effected. All existing conditions of employment will apply to each programme employee;

(c) ECA will be the nerve-centre of the programme, serving as clearing house on candidates and vacancies, and liaison between prospective employer and employee. It will be responsible for administering the programme and for monitoring and evaluating its achievements. It will also act as the programme's fund-raiser with full responsibility for disbursing and accounting programme funds, which will be used to:

(i) transport participants and two members of their families from their countries of origin to their countries of work and back;

(ii) provide medical and accident insurance for one year at $US 300 per person;

(iii) provide an inducement allowance of $US 200/month/middle-level employee and $US 500/month/high-level employee;

(iv) provide a bonus of $US 100 per candidate placed, to each programme liaison officer.

The approximate annual cost of placement of one candidate is as follows:

	Item		$US
(i)	Inducement	$US 300 x 12	3,600
(ii)	Travel	$US1,500 x 3	4,500
(iii)	Insurance	$US 300 x 3	900
(iv)	Bonus	$US 100 X 1	100
	Cost per placement		9,100

E. Additional sources of finance

22. Governments: Each participating government will be required to contribute at least $US 5,000 per annum to the programme. Additional contributions would be most welcome. These will be paid into the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development which is administered at ECA.

F. Reporting

23. A yearly report on the achievements of the programme will be provided to each participating government, and reports on the use of donor funds will also be prepared for the donor in accordance with its reporting requirements.

24. A full account of the use of project funds will be prepared and circulated to each participating government and donor agency. The programme will use the forum of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization to solicit the views of African Governments on the further development of the programme.

G. Priority skill categories

25. Although the programme will endeavour to address all areas of need, in the initial years it will concentrate on removing shortages in the following skill categories:

(a) Secondary school teachers;

(b) Teachers for tertiary-level educational institutions;

(c) Medical and health personnel;

(d) Management personnel;

(e) Scientific and technical staff (particularly for agriculture).

26. The programme in its first phase would be a pilot project limited to few African countries having shortages and surpluses of middle- and high-level manpower. It intends to provide assistance for the placement of 150 skilled Africans over a two-year period.